



ELIGIBILITY OF CALIFORNIA'S 1996 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES FOR ADMISSION TO THE STATE'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES



CALIFORNIA
POSTSECONDARY
EDUCATION
COMMISSION

Summary

This is the Executive Summary of the report entitled "Eligibility of California's 1996 High School Graduates for Admission to the State's Public Universities" (report number 97-9). The Commission adopted this report at its meeting on December 15, 1997. Additional copies of this executive summary or the full report may be obtained from the Commission Publication Office at (916) 322-8024. Questions about the substance of the report may be directed to Jeanne Suhr Ludwig of the Commission at by telephone at (916) 322-8001, or by e-mail at jludwig@cpec.ca.gov.

Executive Summary of the 1996 Eligibility Study

What is an eligibility study and why are they important?

An Eligibility Study is a review of the academic preparation of public high school graduates in light of the current freshman admission requirements at the State's public universities. The Master Plan for Higher Education urged the California State University to establish its freshman admission requirements such that the top one-third, or 33.3 percent, of the public high school graduates would be eligible. Similarly, it urged the University of California to set its freshman admission requirements such that the top one-eighth, or 12.5 percent, of these graduates would be eligible for the University. Periodically, the California Postsecondary Education Commission, in collaboration with the State's public university systems and with the cooperation of the public high schools, conducts an eligibility study to determine the congruence between these guidelines and the actual proportions of public high school graduates eligible for freshman admission at each system. This is the eighth such study since the development of the Master Plan.

The 1996 Eligibility Study closely replicates the design of the eligibility studies conducted on the graduating classes of 1983, 1986, and 1990. This permits the comparison of the estimated statewide eligibility rate for each system with its Master Plan guideline, but also provides an adequate sample of graduates' academic records to analyze differences in eligibility among men and women, among graduates from four major racial-ethnic groups -- Asian, Black, Latino and White graduates -- and among graduates from 11 geographic regions of the state. In addition, the current study also includes information about differences in eligibility of graduates of rural, suburban, and urban public high schools.

In short, eligibility is the complex interaction of the courses completed, grades earned, and college admission tests taken. The eligibility rates presented in this report are the average eligibility of all public high school graduates as represented by the sample of graduates' transcripts analyzed. These analyses provide a rich information source about high school students' academic preparation for college.

Who are the 1996 public high school graduates?

The 1996 public high school graduating class entered high school in 1992 -- a time when

- ♦ University admission requirements were becoming increasingly more rigorous,
- ♦ The California economy was in the depth of the worst recession since the 1930s,
- ♦ Public high school counseling and other support services were diminishing,

- ♦ The cost of attending public universities in California was skyrocketing,
- ♦ The size and diversity of the student population was expanding, and
- ♦ Accessibility to college courses was perceived as shrinking.

Information available about the 1996 public high school graduates included many positive trends

- ♦ An increasing proportion of public high school students were staying in school and graduating -- the drop-out rate in 1996 -- 3.9 percent -- was much lower than for the 1990 class when it was 5.2 percent,
- ♦ An increasing proportion of public high school graduates were completing a high school curriculum that was consistent with the freshman admission course requirements of the State's public universities -- 37.9 percent of 1996 graduates completed this curriculum compared to 32.6 percent in 1990,
- ♦ An increasing proportion of high school graduates took college admission examinations -- on the SAT I, participation increased from 46.5 percent to 51.2 percent and on the ACT test, participation increased from 7.4 percent to 12.2 percent between 1990 and 1996. Scores for Californians were generally comparable, and
- ♦ A larger proportion of public high school seniors were participating in Advanced Placement examinations -- 10 percent in 1990 to 13.2 percent in 1996

Overview of study findings

In summary, a larger proportion of public high school graduates enrolled in the college preparatory curriculum required for university admission in 1996 than in 1990 while the proportion of graduates whose academic experiences during high school was essentially unrelated to college preparation diminished. The proportion of graduates who only needed to take the college admission tests required by the University of California in order to be eligible also expanded substantially. *The proportion of public high school students who aspired to attend the university and prepared themselves for that postsecondary experience grew faster than the proportion of these graduates who had been completely successful in achieving eligibility.* As a result of the expanding admission requirements at the State's public universities, a smaller proportion of graduates were fully eligible for these institutions in 1996 than in 1990. However, the trend is very clear:

More of the State's public high school graduates are preparing themselves for college, even with more rigorous admission requirements. With more time and support, more graduates will be eligible for our universities.

What are the eligibility rates for the California State University?

In considering the finding of this study for the State University, it is important to recognize that the 1996 freshman admission requirements at the California State University were substantially more stringent than those in place in 1990. In 1990, a public high school graduate in California must have completed at least 12 of the 15 required college preparatory courses and those 12 courses must have included at least five of the seven required courses in English and mathematics to be considered eligible. By 1996, a graduate must have completed all 15 required courses, including all seven of the required courses in English and mathematics.

Statewide Of 1996 public high school graduates, an estimated 29.6 percent were eligible for freshman admission at the California State University. This rate was 3.7 percentage points below the Master Plan guideline of 33.3 percent for this system and 5.0 percentage points below the 1990 eligibility rate for this system of 34.6 percent. Over the last ten years, an increasing proportion of California public high school graduates enrolled in a college preparatory curriculum, however, the proportion who were successful in completing that curriculum at an achievement level sufficient to be eligible for the State University has not yet expanded enough to reach the Master Plan guideline. Missing one or more of the required courses is the most prevalent cause of ineligibility.

What are some of the differences in eligibility across groups?

Men and women Consistent with the statewide trend, the eligibility rates of both men and women decreased. Women continued to be significantly more likely to be eligible for the State University, were more likely to have completed the required courses, and earned higher grades. Men were more likely to be missing courses and test scores and were more likely to have completed high school with GPAs below 2.0.

Four racial-ethnic groups (Asian, Black, Latino, and White) While the eligibility rates decreased for all groups, the rate of decline was steepest for Black and Latino graduates. Most of the decrease in the pools of eligible graduates for all groups occurred among those graduates with GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0. Among graduates with GPAs within this range who had completed the required course work, Black and, to some extent Latino, graduates were somewhat less likely to earn college admission tests scores that were sufficient to qualify them on the State University's Eligibility Index. However, across all groups, the most common cause of ineligibility was missing one or more of the required courses.

Regional differences The eligibility rate of graduates for freshman admission at the California State University declined in all geographic regions of the State. In 1996 for the first time, the San Francisco Bay region surpassed Orange County in the proportions of its graduates eligible for the State University. While the San Francisco Bay region and Orange County experienced some of the largest declines in the proportions of their graduates who were eligible for the State University, the eligibility rates for these two regions remained significantly above aver-

age The San Diego/Imperial county region, now second only to the Bay Area in proportion of eligible graduates, saw only a very small decrease in their graduates' eligibility rate Other good news is that some of the regions that historically have had the lowest eligibility rates -- the Central Valley and the Riverside/San Bernardino county region -- had relatively small decreases in their pools of eligible graduates Other bad news is that the largest region of the State -- Los Angeles County -- experienced an above average decline in the proportion of their graduates eligible for the State University The net effect of these changes has been a narrowing of the range of eligibility rates across the State

Area differences Only slightly more than one-fourth of all rural and urban public high school graduates were eligible for the State University while about one-third of the suburban high school graduates were eligible One out of every five rural high school graduates and one out of every six suburban and urban high school graduates were ineligible because they had not completed the full set of required courses In addition, particularly in rural and urban high schools, student participation and performance on college admission tests played a key role in determining these graduates' eligibility

What are the eligibility rates for the University of California?

Two changes occurred in the freshman admission requirements at the University of California between 1990 and 1996

- 1 In 1992, the minimum grade-point average considered increased from 2.79 to 2.82, and
- 2 In 1994, the University specified that student's required courses must include two year-long courses in Laboratory Science and two year-long courses in history with the additional year focusing on World History and Geography This change reduced the number of required electives from four to two

Statewide Of 1996 public high school graduates, 11.1 percent were fully eligible for freshman admission at the University of California This rate is 1.4 percentage points below the Master Plan guideline of 12.5 percent for this system and 1.2 percentage points below their 1990 eligibility rate of 12.3 percent

Over the last ten years, a domino effect appears to have been operating in terms of the academic preparation of high school students for the University The proportion of public high school graduates whose curricular experiences during high school were substantially unrelated to the University's required pattern of college preparatory courses declined, while the proportion who were ineligible for the University because of minor deficiencies in courses or achievement expanded Also growing was the proportion of graduates who completed all of the required course work with sufficiently high grades but were determined ineligible because they were missing one or more of the required college admission tests -- the "potentially" eligible pool While admission requirements have increased, students have increased

their level of participation in college preparatory activities -- courses and tests -- but these improvements have not yet expanded the fully eligible pool

What are the differences across student groups?

For men and women. While the eligibility rates for both men and women declined, women continued to expand their relative academic competitive advantage for freshman admission at the University of California. The decline in the eligibility pool was much steeper for men. Concomitantly, the growth in the pool of "potentially" eligible graduates was much larger for women. While the decrease in the pool of men with major academic deficiencies as they relate to the University's admission requirements was roughly the same as the increase in the pool of men with minor academic deficiencies, the decrease in the pool of women with major deficiencies expanded both the pool of women with minor academic deficiencies and the pool of "potentially" eligible women.

For four racial-ethnic groups. The decline in the University's eligibility pool reflected decreases in the proportions of Asian and Black graduates fully eligible for the University. The eligibility rates for Latino and White graduates were essentially the same in 1996 as they had been in 1990. However, every major racial-ethnic group showed some improvement in their academic preparation for the University. The pool of "potentially" eligible graduates expanded for all four groups of graduates in 1996. Proportionally fewer Black, Latino, and White graduates completed high school with major course and performance deficiencies relative to the freshman admission requirements at the University. As a consequence, there was growth either in the proportions of graduates from all four racial-ethnic groups who were "potentially" eligible or were ineligible because of only minor academic deficiencies.

Regional differences. In 1996 for the first time, the San Francisco Bay region surpassed Orange County in terms of the proportion of its graduates who were fully eligible for freshman admission at the University of California. While both these regions experienced a decline in the proportion of their graduates who were fully eligible for the University, the eligibility rates remained significantly above average. In contrast to the statewide decrease in eligibility, the eligibility rates in several regions of the State actually increased -- notably, the San Diego/Imperial county region, the Riverside/San Bernardino county region, and the Central Valley. The sharpest declines in regional eligibility rates for the University occurred in the South Coast region (San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties) and in Northern California. The decline in the eligibility rate for Los Angeles County graduates was very similar to the statewide decline while the greater Sacramento region had a very slight decline in the eligibility rate of its graduates between 1990 and 1996.

Area differences. The eligibility rate of suburban public high school graduates for freshman admission at the University of California -- 13.0 percent -- was nearly twice the eligibility rate of rural public high school graduates -- 7.1 percent. The

eligibility rate of graduates of urban high schools -- 10.3 percent -- fell between that of rural and suburban schools. Among rural high school graduates, ineligibility arose from not completing the full pattern of University required courses and not taking the required college admission examinations. Among urban high school graduates, these two conditions contributed to their ineligibility as well as being somewhat less likely than graduates in other areas to earn college admission test scores that were high enough to qualify them on the University's Eligibility Index.

Conclusions Some of these findings raise more questions than they provide answers. All of the systems of public education in California are committed to an ongoing research effort to better understand the implications of the results of this study. However, the study findings make perfectly clear that California is on the right path to increasing the preparation for college of its public high school students of all backgrounds, circumstances, and geographic regions. To make further progress, more students need to enroll in and complete the full sequence of courses required for admission to the State's public universities. Students also need to be encouraged to complete the college admission examinations required for admission at the university system of their choice. In addition, while some of the variation in eligibility rates has been reduced -- for example, among geographic regions of the State -- there remain persistent and consistent differences, particularly among various racial-ethnic groups, some geographic regions, and types of schools, these differences must be addressed if all Californians are to have a prosperous future. It is a challenge and a responsibility that we must all work on together.

CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

THE California Postsecondary Education Commission is a citizen board established in 1974 by the Legislature and Governor to coordinate the efforts of California's colleges and universities and to provide independent, non-partisan policy analysis and recommendations to the Governor and Legislature

Members of the Commission

The Commission consists of 17 members. Nine represent the general public, with three each appointed for six-year terms by the Governor, the Senate Rules Committee, and the Speaker of the Assembly. Six others represent the major segments of postsecondary education in California. Two student members are appointed by the Governor.

As of December 1997, the Commissioners representing the general public are

Jeff Marston, San Diego, *Chair*
Guillermo Rodriguez, Jr., San Francisco,
Vice Chair
Mim Andelson, Los Angeles
Alan S. Arkatov, Los Angeles
Henry Der, San Francisco
Lance Izumi, San Francisco
Kyo "Paul" Jhin, Malibu
Bernard Luskin, Encino
Melinda G. Wilson, Torrance

Representatives of the segments are

Kyhl Smeby, Pasadena, appointed by the Governor to represent the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities,
Joe Dolphin, San Diego, appointed by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges,
Gerti Thomas, Albany, appointed by the California State Board of Education,
Ralph Pesqueira, San Diego, appointed by the Trustees of the California State University,
Frank R. Martinez, San Luis Obispo, appointed by the Council for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education, and

David S. Lee, Santa Clara, appointed by the Regents of the University of California

The two student representatives are
Stephen R. McShane, San Luis Obispo
John E. Stratman, Jr., Orange

Functions of the Commission

The Commission is charged by the Legislature and Governor to "assure the effective utilization of public postsecondary education resources, thereby eliminating waste and unnecessary duplication, and to promote diversity, innovation, and responsiveness to student and societal needs."

To this end, the Commission conducts independent reviews of matters affecting the 2,600 institutions of postsecondary education in California, including community colleges, four-year colleges, universities, and professional and occupational schools.

As an advisory body to the Legislature and Governor, the Commission does not govern or administer any institutions, nor does it approve, authorize, or accredit any of them. Instead, it performs its specific duties of planning, evaluation, and coordination by cooperating with other State agencies and non-governmental groups that perform those other governing, administrative, and assessment functions.

Operation of the Commission

The Commission holds regular meetings throughout the year at which it discusses and takes action on staff studies and takes positions on proposed legislation affecting education beyond the high school in California. By law, its meetings are open to the public. Requests to speak at a meeting may be made by writing the Commission in advance or by submitting a request before the start of the meeting.

The Commission's day-to-day work is carried out by its staff in Sacramento, under the guidance of Executive Director Warren Halsey Fox, Ph.D., who is appointed by the Commission.

Further information about the Commission and its publications may be obtained from the Commission offices at 1303 J Street, Suite 500, Sacramento, California 95814-2938, telephone (916) 445-7933.

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Commission Report 97-10



ONE of a series of reports published by the California Postsecondary Education Commission as part of its planning and coordinating responsibilities. Summaries of these reports are available on the Internet at <http://www.cpec.ca.gov>. Single copies may be obtained without charge from the Commission at 1303 J Street, Suite 500, Sacramento, California 95814-2938. Recent reports include

1997

- 97-1 *Coming of [Information] Age in California Higher Education: A Survey of Technology Initiatives and Policy Issues* (February 1997)
- 97-2 *Faculty Salaries at California's Public Universities, 1997-98. A Report to the Governor and Legislature in Response to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 51 (1965)* (April 1997)
- 97-3 *A Review of the Proposed Watsonville Center -- An Educational Center of the Cabrillo Community College District. A Report to the Governor and Legislature in Response to a Request from the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges* (June 1997)
- 97-4 *A Review of the Proposed Academy of Entertainment and Technology -- An Educational Center of the Santa Monica Community College District. A Report to the Governor and Legislature in Response to a Request from the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges* (June 1997)
- 97-5 *A Review of the Proposed North County Center in Paso Robles -- An Educational Center of the San Luis Obispo County Community College District. A Report to the Governor and Legislature in Response to a Request from the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges* (June 1997)
- 97-6 *California Postsecondary Education Commission Workplan, 1996 Through 2000 (1997 Update)* (June 1997)
- 97-7 *Student Profiles, 1997: The Latest in a Series of Annual Factbooks About Student Participation in California Higher Education* (August 1997)
- 97-8 *Fiscal Profiles, 1997: The Seventh in a Series of Factbooks About the Financing of California Higher Education* (October 1997)
- 97-9 *Eligibility of California's 1996 High School Graduates for Admission to the State's Public Universities: A Report of the California Postsecondary Education Commission* (December 1997)
- 97-10 *Eligibility of California's 1996 High School Graduates for Admission to the State's Public Universities -- Executive Summary: A Report of the California Postsecondary Education Commission* (December 1997)